

# THE **BUSAN** **DAILY** No. 3 **Hollywood** **REPORTER**

THR.COM/BUSAN

OCTOBER 6, 2013



## Young Talent Flies High in Busan

Actor-turned-director Ha Jung-woo touches down in Busan to promote his airplane comedy *Fasten Your Seatbelt*

From left: *Fasten Your Seatbelt* stars Lee Ji-hoon, Ko Sung-hee, Chung Kyung-ho, director Ha Jung-woo, stars Han Sung-chun and Choi Gyu-hwan.



# THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

OCTOBER 6, 2013 | BUSAN | No.3  
THR.COM/BUSAN

BUSAN  
WEATHER  
AND HIGH  
TEMPS

TODAY  
79° F  
26° C



TOMORROW  
80° F  
27° C



## Korean Actors Shine Behind the Camera

By Park Soo-mee

When 48-year-old South Korean actor **Park Joong-hoon** decided to direct his debut feature *Top Star*, he looked to a subject he knew well. The film, a story about ambitious young people getting a start in the entertainment industry, is based on observations Park has collected since he appeared in his first movie at age 20.

Like Park, a growing number of Korean actors are taking a turn in the director's chair. Aside from *Top Star*, the organizers of this year's Busan International Film Festival have selected

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## Kim Ji-woon Talks Up 'ScreenX'

By Park Soo-mee

Shortly after the Busan screening of his latest action short, director **Kim Ji-woon** enthusiastically shared what it's like shooting in ScreenX, the new large-format exhibition and film production technology from CGV, South Korea's largest multiplex chain.

"It was a very meaningful experiment for me," said Kim (*The Last Stand*), adding that he approached the format as if he were working

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WORLD PREMIERE



A criminal exacts revenge by strapping dynamite to his enemies.

## Dynamite Man

A meditative and atmospheric thriller that bucks genre conventions but stays true to its pulpy roots BY ELIZABETH KERR

Despite being saddled with an utterly dreadful title and some subtitles that could and should be a little more polished, particularly for international release, *Dynamite Man* is a refreshingly verbose departure from the conventions of the Korean revenge thriller. Imperfect though it may be, the film has a mesmerizing quality to it that makes it infinitely watchable regardless of the film's deliberate pace, and it should slot in nicely wherever artistic crime thrillers similar to it have worked in the past, for both distributors and on the festival circuit.

The story begins with Jeok-san (Jeong Do-won) visiting with his dying brother in the hospital. The two had been involved with a gangster, Pil-seong (the hyperbolic Park Seong-taek), and when he discovered their plan to leave the

criminal underworld behind and relocate to Japan they were forced to face his wrath at their betrayal. In black and white flashbacks the brothers are beaten to within an inch of their lives, and the younger Heuk-san (Park Geon-gyu) is set on fire. Jeok-san survives, and begins a campaign of vengeance that destroys Pil-seong's gang. He does so by systematically tracking down the key perpetrators, knocking them out and strapping dynamite to them before waking them up and setting a timer for them to see.

*Dynamite Man* is not an easy film to watch. In addition to the violence inherent in the story and the sub-genre, director Jeong Hyu-kwon plays with both audience expectation and structure just enough to stand out in a crowded field.

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## Actors Shine

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two other films by actors — *A Woman Under the Influence* by **Choo Sang-mi** and *Fasten Your Seatbelt* by **Ha Jung-woo**.

"It's a natural phenomenon and you see similar cases in Hollywood," says **Nam Dong-chul**, the programmer of the festival's selection of Korean films, adding that the genre and scale of films by actors-turned-directors have grown

more diverse over the years to include indie films and middle-budget projects such as *Top Star*.

"Shooting the film gave me a clearer idea of my acting in a very descriptive way," says Ha. "It also made me appreciate directors more. I never realized how lonely they could be."

Certain advantages seem to exist for actors-turned-directors; most notably, their names are often invaluable to the film's publicity. Tickets for Ha

Jung-woo's film *Fasten Your Seatbelt*, a comedy set on an airplane that encounters turbulence, sold out in a minute at BIFF, according to the festival organizer.

Park says actors-turned-directors also have a better sense of the actors' needs on a shoot.

"Directors often complain that actors are too insecure," Park says. "On the shoot, actors always want confirmation about how they will appear on camera. But I understand exactly how vulnerable they feel. So I tried to encourage them by giving them as much feedback as possible."

Despite the growing trend, insiders so far are viewing productions from actors-turned-directors more as an experiment than a bankable business model. Nam says the Korean industry hasn't seen enough examples to draw conclusions.

Park, meanwhile, readily admits that his career as a director will come down to his works' performance at the box office. **THR**

## ScreenX

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with "a horizontal version of Imax."

ScreenX uses three screens (center, left and right) to create a panoramic viewing experience, and a 3D sound system that the company says generates a richer sense of sonic space and distance.

"We tried to find a way to keep the original structure of the theater space as much as possible to prevent a major cost increase and maintain a familiar environment for viewers," said **Noh Jun-young**, a technology professor from KAIST — South Korea's answer to MIT — who was hired for the filmmaking.

CGV, a subsidiary of Korean conglomerate CJ, has applied for patents in Korea for the technology. Representatives from the company say they are currently exploring business partnership possibilities for the format with production companies in Hollywood. **THR**

## No End in Sight for China Film Sector's Rapid Expansion

By Clifford Coonan

China has generated plenty of chatter at the Busan International Film Festival, as the country's burgeoning film business sees its influence grow in Asia and beyond.

One of the most sought-after industryites at this year's event is **Jia Zhangke**, whose latest movie *A Touch of Sin* is earning glowing reviews.

Other Chinese films at the festival include Fei Xing's *Silent Witness* and **Yu Lulai's** *Brother and The Nightingale*, which is directed by Frenchman **Philippe Muyl**.

Meanwhile, filmmaker **Brett Ratner** announced his plans this week to partner with Australian media chief **James**



**Packer** to make movies in China.

"There is a real chance to grab the opportunity in China. In 10 years' time the Chinese box office will have overtaken the United States," Packer told the *Australian Financial Review*.

Box office receipts for last year were 17 billion yuan (\$2.78 billion) and revenues have already reached 15 billion yuan (\$2.4 billion) by September 2013, **Luan Guozhi**, vice-president of the Film Bureau, said recently. Luan expects box office returns for 2013 to reach 20

billion yuan (\$3.27 billion).

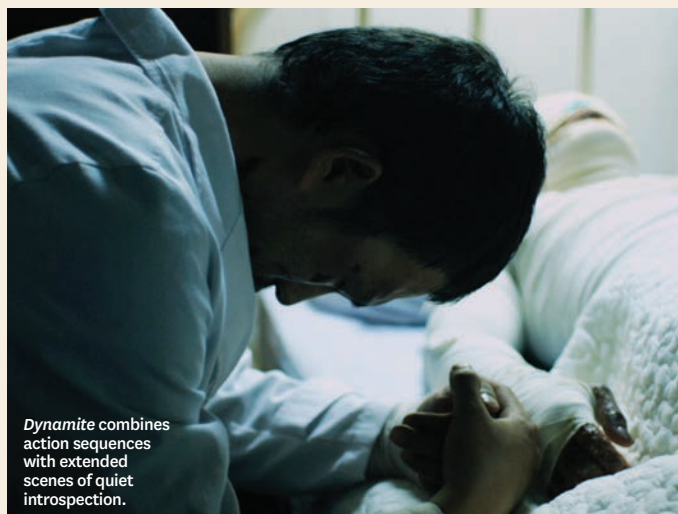
Driving the transformation has been strong growth in the number of screens — a total of 3,832 new screens were added to the market last year to total 13,118.

And China is increasingly opening up to foreign movies. In February of last year, the Beijing government expanded the quota of overseas movies from around 20 to 34 per year on a revenue-share basis, including enhanced format movies.

It's not all been sweetness and light. Relations between Hollywood and China were tense earlier this year after China Film Group refused to pay over hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid box office because of a tax issue, but the Motion Picture Association said the issue has been resolved and CFG will pay between \$100 million and \$150 million owed to the studios. **THR**



# REVIEWS



*Dynamite* combines action sequences with extended scenes of quiet introspection.

## *Dynamite Man*

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Essentially told in three acts —the set-up and early hospital visit, a conversation between Jeok-san and a priest from the brothers' miserable childhood and the grand finale — *Dynamite Man* emphasizes words and ideas over action and

allows the story to build almost literally.

With the exception of the few sequences where Jeok-san takes his revenge, cinematographer Kim Hyo-won's camera remains still, and allows Jeong and production designer Park Yong-jae to build grimy, grim claustrophobic spaces for extended conversations between the characters that range from morality, good and evil, the nature of the human soul, family and home to name a few. It's a bold decision to mix long scenes of dialogue in a genre exercise like this but the experiment by and large pays off.

Jeok-san — played with stoic intensity by relative unknown Jeong — sits passively while he chats with his friend and priest about what good his mission will serve, and that unfolds in (seemingly) one 30-minute shot. Those quiet, static moments will try the patience of anyone expecting major pyrotechnics from a film with the word "dynamite" in the title. But for those willing to listen to the words being spoken there's a gentle power in Jeong's images that makes it worth the effort.

*Korean Cinema Today*

**Cast** Jeong Do-won, Park Geon-gyu, Park Seong-taek

**Director** Jeong Hyu-kwon

101 minutes

## God's Eye View

Lee Jang-ho's first film in 18 years follows the fallout among a group of Christians kidnapped by Islamist rebels in a fictional Southeast Asian country **BY CLARENCE TSUI**

For *God's Eye View*'s characters, it's all about how good Christians are at keeping their faith while under duress; for the film's viewers, it's all about how one is good at sustaining their suspended disbelief. How could anyone maintain interest, otherwise, in a film where Koreans, after being kidnapped by Islamist guerillas in the deep of a Southeast Asian jungle, freely bond with some of their captors amid games of shuttlecock, and even see their guards procure Korean-made noodles for them?

Then again, these could be seen as just the more minor of setbacks in South Korean director Lee Jang-ho's first film in 18 years, which has just made its bow at Busan.

Exploring the tribulations faced by a group of Korean missionaries abducted by a band of Islamist guerillas in the fictional Southeast Asian country of

Ismal — the film was actually shot in Cambodia — *God's Eye View* plays with a multitude of genre codes and ends up too melodramatic to be a taut thriller, while its simplistic rendition of ransom-related realpolitik undercuts its possible pretensions as political drama.

But it's a piece which will play well among Christian audiences. Driving *God's Eye View* is an examination of the concept of martyrdom, a fate which the film's lead character Yohan (Oh Kwang-rok) repeatedly contemplates. Yohan appears at first to be a man of questionable ethics — taking kickbacks from restaurants and recruiting village children to bolster the numbers of his baptism rituals. He gradually confronts these dark deeds, which ultimately leads to a religious epiphany in the jungle.

With Yohan taking the shape of a modern-day Jesus, the other characters



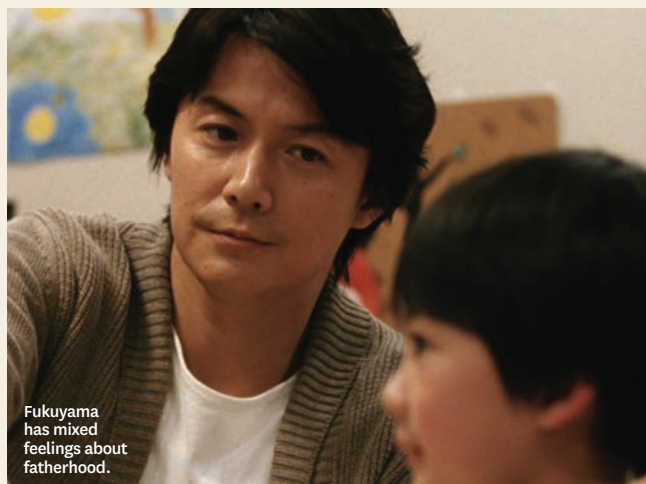
Captor and kidnapper slowly bond.

could be seen as mere disciples. They all come with their particular flaws, but most of them remain too underdeveloped or painfully obvious: There's an adulterous relationship between two of the young travelers that amounts to little; and the revelation that the "elder" of the group (Park Yong-sik) has possibly been cheating on and beating his wife (Kim Min-kyung), is too heavy handed to resonate. Like much of the film, it may be a preaching exercise gone too far.

*Korean Cinema Today*

**Cast** Oh Kwang-rok, Nam Dong-ha

**Director** Lee Jang-ho // 89 minutes



## Like Father, Like Son

Japanese director Kore-eda Hirokazu returns to the theme of children living apart from their families in a witty — if flawed — human drama

BY DEBORAH YOUNG

Light and airy in spite of its rather shocking subject, Kore-eda Hirokazu's *Like Father, Like Son* almost facetiously examines the agony of two families who are informed that their 6-year-old boys were switched at birth. From Gilbert and Sullivan to *Desperate Housewives*, the changeling plot has always held a morbid, slightly absurd fascination. Here it's a powerful premise but one that practically precludes empathy, and viewers may be justifiably skeptical that four parents, at least three of whom seem normal, would ever consider swapping children they had nurtured that long. Though it's packed with adorable tykes and more than a few strong scenes, even Kore-eda fans may feel a let-down with a lovely film that makes little emotional connection. Still the wit and charm are there and the filming is impeccable, full of wry humor underlining a slightly surreal atmosphere.

Perhaps the film is best viewed as an extreme test of what makes a man feel like the father of a child. Nonomiya Ryota (Masaharu Fukuyama) and his wife Midori (Machiko Ono) are card-carrying yuppies with a wide-eyed little son named Keita, already being groomed for the fast track. The Saikis, meanwhile, are poor bumpkins living outside the city although, they're loving, laid-back parents who fly kites and take baths with their three small kids.

It takes the couples several meetings to size up their natural offspring, and little by little the unthinkable happens: they start exchanging sons on the weekend. Gradually things turn serious and the focus shifts to Ryota, played by the tall, aristocratic-looking singer-turned-actor Fukuyama as an emotional cripple whose dawning feelings of fatherhood provide the story with a happy, if still very open, ending.

*A Window on Asian Cinema*

**Cast** Fukuyama Masaharu, Ono Machiko

**Director** Kore-eda Hirokazu

## Kore-eda Hirokazu

The Japanese auteur discusses his babies-swapped-at-birth drama *Like Father, Like Son* — acquired by DreamWorks for a remake — and how being a parent influenced the project **By** Gavin J. Blair

**You're a father yourself, how much did your feelings about parenthood come through in the film?**

That's right; I have one child, and don't get to spend enough time with her. It's different than for mothers, how fathers feel about interacting with their children is a complex thing. I feel it's complicated and I thought I would try to get the lead actor to try and feel and portray that.

**You have a daughter though, so didn't you think about making the child in the film a girl?**

The connections between father and son are really interesting. It's really about the relationship between the main character, his son, and then when he becomes a father, how he interacts with his own son. Fatherhood is the theme.

**How do you think the film will be received overseas?**

It's not that I'm not concerned about foreign audiences at all, but it's not something that is at the forefront of my mind when I make films. With my films until now I don't think they've been seen that differently at home and abroad; people laugh in the same places. I don't shoot films thinking that I should make a certain part easier to understand for overseas audiences or anything like that. One thing that may be different with this film is that there isn't widespread adoption in Japan, bringing up children who aren't

related by blood. So there's a very fundamental sense that families are connected by blood; I think that notion is

much stronger in Japan than it is in the West. In the cases of babies that were



switched at birth that I researched for the film, pretty much 100 percent of the parents automatically chose their biological child.

**Were there a lot of those cases in Japan?**

In the 70s there were quite a few, during the baby boom when there was a shift from giving birth at home to doing so in hospitals, and there was a lack of nurses. The hospitals were overstretched and it occurred quite a bit.

**How did you end up becoming a director?**

I was always a fan, but I actually didn't go to the cinema much when I was a child, it was mainly watching films at home with my mother. When I went to go to university, I wanted to be an author. But around my university there were cinemas that showed films where the name of the directors came first: Rossellini, Fellini and Truffaut and so on. That's what made me conscious of what a director was. I've been doing it for 30 years now, so I guess it was the right choice, though in another 10 years I might look back and think it was a mistake. **THR**

# Ongoing Smile

Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf delivers a love letter to Busan International Film Festival founder and honorary chairman Kim Dong-ho

BY CLARENCE TSUI

The title of Mohsen Makhmalbaf's 52-minute documentary about Busan International Film Festival founder Kim Dong-ho is taken from a film critic's comment about how Korean cinema's doyen always appears beaming as he meets and greets everyone coming his way. Indeed, *Ongoing Smile* is more about Kim's personality than his deeds: it is only in the film's last ten minutes that interviewees begin to mention the significance and relevance of the event Kim has brought to the forefront of the international film festival circuit. Those seeking the context in which the Busan festival sprang to A-list status might have to look elsewhere.

But at least Makhmalbaf

has been clear from the start that his film is nothing but a letter of love to one of the most revered festival gurus in Asia, if not the world. As shown in the film, Kim is the man who could get Juliette Binoche and Cannes head Thierry Fremaux to do the train dance with the masses in a public event at his festival. He can even whip teenage volunteers into a sort of frenzy when he appears at venues and shakes their hands.

*Ongoing Smile* doesn't pretend to be a conventional biographical documentary. The imagery is all in the here and now, in place of narrated expositions of Kim's personal background. Makhmalbaf films Kim's daily routine (which sees him invariably



waking up at 4am to exercise before heading to work) or meeting his longtime friends and belting out the anthems they sung together while serving in the army.

And in between his appearances at the festival — which he helmed until he retired two years ago — are sequences showing him in the process of shooting his first film, the short *Jury* (which is shown at the festival this year in a double-bill

with *Ongoing Smile*).

It's a screening arrangement which suits *Ongoing Smile* best. While not exactly fully-fleshed, Makhmalbaf's film could be seen as a Cheshire Cat of a documentary: never mind the nitty-gritty of history, it's the aura of that grin which remains.

*Wide Angle*

**Director**

Mohsen Makhmalbaf

52 minutes

# Steel Cold Winter

A chilly and chilling teen drama that is essentially two films in one (one being stronger than the other) BY ELIZABETH KERR

Ever since *Bleak Night* found some success in 2010, stories about disaffected teens and their violent fates have been ensured a place in New Currents and this year's representative is *Steel Cold Winter*, a downbeat and, yes, bleak portrait of the friendship between two alienated teens in small town Korea.

Provincial, gossipy Suji village is troubled teen Yoon-su's (Kim Si-hoo) new home, his parents having shuffled him off there after a trauma in Seoul. He's an immediate hit with his class being the big city kid, but he's drawn toward the retiring, enigmatic Hye-won (Kim Yun-hea). She's the subject of endless rumor and innuendo regarding the exact nature of her and her father's relationship, and at first Yoon-su is

uninterested in playing village politics. They get to know each other during Hye-won nightly skates on the frozen lake, and like a gun in Chekhov, her skates prove ominous.

When *Steel Cold Winter* focuses on the bond between Hye-won and Yoon-su and their disconnect from the rest of the class it smacks of typical teen

angst, but it does so gracefully. Yoon-su hides behind his headphones and hair, rarely making eye contact and only tolerating his popularity. Hye-won suffers silently (like most Korean high school girl characters do) and never reveals her emotions around her neighbors.

After an incident involving her father and a classmate, Hye-won's dad turns up dead and Yoon-su's flip flopping over his feelings for her leads to some ugly revelations involving rape and corruption in the town. Then the clinical rather than shocking murdering starts. Beginning as a low-key tale of friendship and romance and ending as an almost killing spree thriller, *Steel Cold Winter*'s biggest flaw is simply not knowing what it wants to be.

*New Currents*

**Cast** Kim Si-hoo, Kim Yun-hea

**Director** Choi Jin-seong

No rating, 110 minutes







The film's title refers to Sri Lanka before it became a republic in 1972.

## Ceylon

**Director Santosh Sivan looks beyond Indian shores with a story about young orphans braving the violent Sri Lankan civil war in 2009** BY CLARENCE TSUI

Romancing in slow-motion; musical numbers ill-fitting the narrative flow; high-octane shootouts laced with the odd comic touch; a highly-strung, tragic final half hour intended to stir emotions — Santosh Sivan's latest offering boasts of all

the hallmarks of commercial Indian cinema, which should allow the Kerala-born director to continue the fine run he has had in the past few years.

Beyond the more obvious lament about the casualties of war, however, *Ceylon*

— a title that refers to the name of Sri Lanka before it became a republic in 1972 — doesn't actually live up to its title by offering a more substantial understanding of the civil war which tore the South Asian island state apart.

The first half of the film, which comes, like most Indian productions, with an intermission, is more a light-hearted affair. Rajini (Sugandha Ram) — a young Tamil refugee who was just rescued ashore from a shipwreck — recollects her time playing with her friends and her mutual affections for a fellow orphan. But as the bombings begin after the break, darker horizons emerge, and bloodshed, death and exile take over.

It is worthy to note that the story really begins when the children discover the mentally challenged Nandan (Star S. Karan) lying on the beach, his hand clutching at a dagger, which

he says belongs to his “big warrior brother.” Along the way, Nandan collects items that might as well serve as totems of war: death (in the shape of a skull), capital (a \$100 note a departing foreigner gives him) and the persistence of life in the face of total social breakdown (a turtle he caught in a field filled with corpses).

These are metaphors which could be seen as shaping *Ceylon's* standing as a showcase of the Tamils' collective trauma. They also help to explain the film's tentative title — the print shown in the Busan press screening still refers to the film as *The Mob* — but more focus and context would have helped the film live up to its seemingly more historical-epic title of *Ceylon*.

*A Window on Asian Cinema*  
**Cast** Sugandha Ram,  
Star S. Karan  
**Director** Santosh Sivan  
125 minutes

## Remote Control

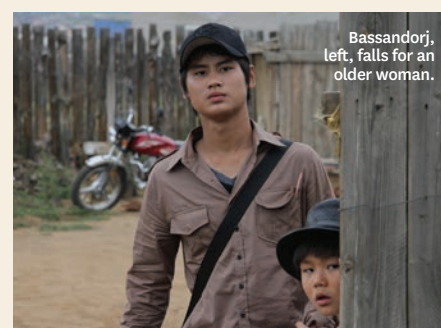
**Byamba Sakhya's first film revolves around a rural teenager trying to connect with city life and urban dwellers** BY CLARENCE TSUI

With its central premise being a young man's fascination with a woman living in a tower block across the street, *Remote Control's* premise reads like a rereading of Krzysztof Kieslowski's *A Short Film About Love*, which tells the tale of a young man's obsession with an older woman. Byamba Sakhya's film offers a teenage epiphany in ways different than the Polish auteur's — the first-time Mongolian director has offered a rite of passage less fatalistic than Kieslowski's — and with a modicum of a comment on the changes in his home country as well.

The film revolves around Tsogoo (Enkhtaivan Bassandorj), a young man hailing from a broken rural family — alcoholic father, cold stepmother, a

crooked elder brother who has long bolted to the city — whose regular milk-selling trips to Ulan Bator has opened his eyes to a life (possibly) less ordinary. After one bust-up too many with his parents, he leaves for the city and camps atop an apartment block where he surveys everything below and begins to dream of leading the lives he sees.

It's more than halfway into the film that the central relationship emerges: Tsogoo spots the lonely Anya (Nergui Bayarmaa), and his attempt to connect with her leads to him nicking a remote control and playing with her gigantic TV. His heart will soon be broken however, as his intervention into her life actually helps



Bassandorj, left, falls for an older woman.

mend her relationship problem.

The film does take some time to get into gear, and yields some hammy acting that diverts some unintentional comedy. Still, Sakhya and his team have crafted a competent debut that effectively showcases the possibilities of Mongolian cinema.

*New Currents*  
**Cast** Enkhtaivan Bassandorj, Nergui Bayarmaa, Chagnaadorj Ganbaatar  
**Director** Byamba Sakhya  
90 minutes



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ASIA | Ivy Lam | [ivy.lam@thr.com](mailto:ivy.lam@thr.com)

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND | Lisa Cruse | [lisa@spiritedmedia.co.nz](mailto:lisa@spiritedmedia.co.nz)

UNITED STATES | Debra Fink | [debra.fink@thr.com](mailto:debra.fink@thr.com)

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